



Public Service Announcement

Don't Text & Drive

Provided by your

Local Emergency Management Office



Don't Text and Drive

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Crashes caused by inattentive drivers are nothing new. Cell phones are the latest distraction.

Falling asleep at the wheel may be the ultimate failure to pay attention, but drivers who are adjusting the radio, trying to discipline small children, or holding cell phones to their ears also contribute to the accident rate. And inattentive driving is a major cause of collisions: The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) says that it's involved in at least a quarter of all crashes.

Cell phones as a problem

The latest, most visible, and most controversial source of driver in-attention is the handheld cell phone. For many motorists, to see another driver talking on the phone is to see red. Cell phones have been available for 20 years and are now everywhere—the Cellular Telecommunications & Internet Association says there are 137 million subscribers in the United States. Cell phone use by drivers has become very common: According to NHTSA, at any given moment of the day, 500,000 drivers of passenger vehicles are talking on handheld cell phones.

This adds up to a lot of miles driven by people who are not necessarily giving their full attention to driving. And handheld phones aren't the only culprits: The AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety has found that use of hands-free phones also contributes to inattention.

Legislation to address the perceived hazard of cell phone use behind the wheel has been passed in many places. Australia, Austria, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Russia, and Switzerland have all restricted cell phone use by drivers.

In the United States, bills to restrict cell phone use in cars have been introduced in both the House and the Senate. Among the states, California and New York have passed a law banning the use of handheld cell phones for drivers, although other states are considering similar laws.

Cell phones as a benefit

Even though the improper use of cell phones is a hazard, the news about them isn't all negative. For example, properly used, phones in cars can mean security when you're on the road. If you need directions, want to report a dangerous condition, or need Emergency Road Service (ERS), a cell phone can be your best friend

Cell phone safety

Phone calls made from the driver's seat contribute to collisions. It's easy to be distracted for a few seconds by dialing or by a heated conversation. And when you're going 60 miles per hour, in only three seconds you travel nearly the length of a football field.

The primary job of a driver is safety. If you must make an extended phone call, pull off the road and park in a safe place.

AAA also recommends you not use your cell phone while driving. However, if you must call when behind the wheel, AAA suggests:



Recognize that driving requires your full attention.

Before you get into the car, become familiar with the phone's features.

Use the phone only if it's absolutely necessary.

Use the phone only when and where it's safe to do so.

Ask a passenger to place the call for you and to do the talking.

Keep the call short.

Tell the person at the other end that you're driving.

Get off the phone as soon as possible—especially in traffic or bad weather.

Don't combine a phone conversation with other distractions.

Secure your phone so it doesn't become a projectile in a crash.